

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-07 AID-05 CEA-01
CIAE-00 COME-00 EPG-02 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-02
INR-07 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04
USIA-15 OES-07 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-10
PA-02 PRS-01 /120 W

-----092880 080410Z /10

R 071715Z JUL 77

FM AMCONSUL WINNIPEG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1937

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

UNCLAS WINNIPEG 245

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, CA

SUBJ: REACTION TO NEB NORTHERN PIPELINE RECOMMENDATION

REF: OTTAWA 5877

1. NEB RECOMMENDATION ALSO RECEIVED EXTENSIVE COVERAGE IN WINNIPEG PAPERS JULY 5, BUT STORY HAS SUBSEQUENTLY MOVED OFF FRONT PAGE.

2. WINNIPEG TRIBUNE REALLY RIPPED INTO RECOMMENDATION IN LONG EDITORIAL ENTITLED: WHAT S IMPORTANT: POLITICS OR REALITIES? SOME EXCERPTS:

-- IT S INCREDIBLE, ALMOST UNTHINKABLE, IN THIS AGE OF ENERGY SHORTAGES REAL AND IMAGINED, THAT A CARIBOO HERD, 200 PEOPLE AND A MILITANT BAND OF SOCIALIST INDIANS COULD WIN A VICTORY OVER THE ECONOMIC FUTURE OF CANADA, BUT THAT S EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED.

-- THE NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD HAS DECIDED THAT POLITICS TAKES PRECEDENCE. IT HAS TAKEN THE GUTLESS COURSE. IT HAS DECIDED THAT YUKON INDIANS ARE EASIER TO DEAL WITH THAN NORTHWEST TERRITORY INDIANS. IT HAS DECIDED THAT HIGHER COST FOR CANADIAN GAS FROM THE MACKENZIE DELTA AND FOR AMERICAN GAS FROM PRUDHOE BAY IS A PRICE
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WORTH PAYING FOR POLITICAL PEACE.

-- IN OUR VIEW, A QUESTIONABLE DECISION -- NOT WRONG NECESSARILY, BUT OPEN TO SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE. WE DON T WANT TO SEE A CARIBOO HERD TRAMPLED, NOR INDIAN RIGHTS DENIED. BUT WE THINK A STAMPEDE IS TAKING PLACE IN OTTAWA AND WE RE SURPRISED THE NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD IS PART OF IT.

-- THERE ARE TIMES WHEN COURAGE FINDS ITS WAY INTO POLITICS.

THIS WASN'T ONE OF THEM.

3. COMMENT: TRIB EDITOR GERRY HASLAM, WHO HAS TOURED ALTERNATE ROUTES, AND STUDIED PROBLEM FOR EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME, WAS AUTHOR OF EDITORIAL.

4. WINNIPEG FREE PRESS EDITORIAL A DAY LATER WAS MORE EQUIVOCAL. ENTITLED 'LITTLE TIME TO DECIDE', IT LED ITS READERS THROUGH THE DECISION-MAKING STEPS WHICH LIE AHEAD, AND EXPRESSED REGRET THAT OTTAWA HAS ABOUT SIX WEEKS OR LESS TO MAKE ONE OF MOST IMPORTANT DECISIONS IN CANADA'S HISTORY.

4. BUSINESS REACTION:

-- WINNIPEG GAS COMPANY SPOKESMAN SAID NEB'S ENDORSEMENT OF ALCAN WILL DELAY EXPLORATION FOR CANADIAN GAS AND COULD LEAD TO POOR AVAILABILITY OF GAS HERE IN FUTURE.

-- MANITOBA CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT WAS DISAPPOINTED WITH NEB RULING, AND HOPED THAT NEB IS NOT PREPARED TO CONSIDER THE LONG-TERM POSSIBLE PROBLEMS OF GAS SUPPLIES IN CANADA.

5. GOVERNMENT REACTION:

-- SPOKESMAN FOR MANITOBA DEPT OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE SAID THE PROVINCE EXPECTED THE ALCAN ROUTE WOULD BE APPROVED AND 'I DON'T THINK IT MAKES ANY DIFFERENCE TO US.'

-- ALTHOUGH THE MANITOBA GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN NO OFFICIAL POSITION ON THE MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE, RELIABLE SOURCES INDICATE
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PREMIER SCHREYER WHO IS RECOGNIZED AS A LEADING AUTHORITY ON ENERGY MATTERS WAS DISAPPOINTED WITH DECISION FOR MANY OF THE SAME REASONS EXPRESSED IN WINNIPEG TRIBUNE EDITORIAL REPORTED PARA 2 ABOVE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, CONSTRUCTION, PIPELINES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 07-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977WINNIP00245
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770242-0701
Format: TEL
From: WINNIPEG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770780/aaaacrsx.tel
Line Count: 98
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 53f7146f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 OTTAWA 5877
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1930782
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REACTION TO NEB NORTHERN PIPELINE RECOMMENDATION
TAGS: ENRG, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/53f7146f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009